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TAGS: [PHUM](#) [PGOV](#) [SY](#)  
SUBJECT: HUMAN RIGHTS ROUND-UP: 2004 QAMISHLI RIOTS  
COMMEMORATED THROUGHOUT SYRIA; UPDATE ON QURRABI RELEASE;  
WAVE OF DETENTIONS CONTINUES

REF: A) DAMASCUS 1107 B) DAMASCUS 1108

Classified By: Charge d'Affaires Stephen A. Seche for reasons 1.4(b)/(d)  
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11. (C) 2004 QAMISHLI RIOTS COMMEMORATED THROUGHOUT SYRIA:  
On March 12, Kurds throughout Syria observed the second anniversary of the 2004 Qamishli riots. Lugman Ois, an Azadi Party activist and member of the Kurdish Committee for Human Rights, told Poloff that a number of activities took place: the observation of five minutes of silence by all Kurds throughout Syria; peaceful gatherings at Kurdish cemeteries in Qamishli, Hassekeh, and Afrin; as well as demonstrations in Damascus at the Prime Minister's Office and Damascus University. In Qamishli, members of the leadership councils of the Azadi and Yekiti parties and the recently formed Future Movement, all Kurdish organizations, gave speeches. A son of the late Sheikh Mashook Khaznawi also spoke, as did Arab civil society activist and former political detainee Ali al-Abdullah. A four-person delegation of Finnish, Canadian, and Norwegian diplomats traveled to Qamishli to observe the events. Kurdish sources estimated that 15,000 people attended the Qamishli gathering; a Norwegian diplomat present at the event told Poloff that 5,000 participants is more accurate. According to both the Norwegian diplomat and Ois, as the event concluded and the crowds began to disperse, riot police used tear gas and shot into the air to control movement. The Norwegian diplomat speculated that the police were trying to provoke a reaction from the Kurdish masses. However, there were no reports of violence or of any arrests in Qamishli. In Afrin, a similar gathering was held at a Kurdish cemetery, during which Yekiti and Azadi party leadership also gave speeches. There were unconfirmed reports of five arrests taking place in Afrin.

12. (C) A number of other commemorative meetings and events took place in Damascus, in addition to the demonstration reported in ref A. According to human rights activist Anwar al-Bunni, as of March 20, three of the March 12 demonstrators remain imprisoned. According to Ois and human rights activist Abdulkarim al-Rihawi, three Kurdish political leaders, Kheiruddin Murad (Azadi Party), Ismail Omar (Kurdish Democratic Unity/Yekiti), and Aziz Daoud (The Kurdish Progressive Democratic Party) met for one hour with an unidentified general in the Prime Minister's Office. The general asked for Kurdish demands, which the three party representatives listed as: a court trial of SARG officials responsible for the 2004 Qamishli events; the return to school/university of Kurdish students expelled for their political activities; and a "democratic solution for Kurdish linguistic, cultural, and national issues." A smaller protest was also held at Damascus University, where Kurdish students conducted a small "stand-in" demonstration, asking

for expelled students to be allowed to return. No arrests were reported at Damascus University.

¶3. (C) UPDATE ON AMMAR QURRABI: During his four-day detention following his return from the U.S. and Europe (ref B), Ammar Qurrabi was treated "respectfully" by his SMI interrogators, according to human rights activist Anwar al-Bunni. Bunni, who has seen Qurrabi a number of times since his release, added that the SMI questions focused mainly on Qurrabi's participation in opposition conferences in the U.S. and Paris. Authorities told Qurrabi that his case would be forwarded to the Supreme State Security Court (SSSC) for trial. Bunni, however, doubts that such a prosecution is likely, as authorities rarely release SSSC defendants prior to or during trial. However, the door does remain open for a military or criminal court prosecution.

¶4. (C) DETENTIONS CONTINUE: Meanwhile, detentions of civil society activists are continuing. The number of student activists detained within the last six weeks has grown to eight, as Diab Sarir and Omar Abdullah, son of Atassi Forum activist and former political detainee Ali Abdullah, have been detained by Air Force Security (SAFI) officials since March 18. Before their detentions, Sarir and Abdullah had been subjected to daily interrogations by SAFI since mid-February. According to Bunni, Abdullah's father had made inquiries with various security service branches about the fate of his son and was informed that all eight students would be facing trial. It remained unclear, however, which court system would have jurisdiction over the case. Bunni also noted that regime critic Abdul Razzaq Id had been detained overnight on March 16 at the Syrian Military Intelligence Palestinian Branch, and was later released on March 17. Bunni added that two of the March 9 demonstrators remained in detention.

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